

The Church – Precious in God’s Sight

It is proper to understand from the Greek word, “*ekklesia*”, which is translated in Scripture as “church” was used by the Greeks to refer to a called out community, or a called out company of people, an assembly for a special purpose. Now the writers of the New Testament make use of the word “*ekklesia*” in the same way the translators of the Greek Septuagint used *ekklesia* to translate the Hebrew word “*qahal*” which is the Hebrew word for the Assembly of God’s people, Israel. Thus we understand the church signifies the people of God. Also it can be noted that the Greek word *ekklesia* is derived from the verb *kalein* which means *to call* and with the precedent *ek* which would signify a “called out” people. The Church then is a collective term embracing the whole company of the called out ones (i.e., saints, elect, chosen, the beloved of God), those who were dead in sin effectually called by the working of the Holy Spirit - called forth from their dead state into life through Jesus Christ, and brought by grace into the new community of faith. We see this description given of the believers at Ephesus in Ephesians 2:1 where we read, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” For our text this morning we see a most precise and excellent description of the church by Apostle Peter in *1 Peter 2:9-10* *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

I want us then to consider the church under these headings, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s own special people, and then conclude with the purpose of the church.

A. First we see that the church is a “chosen generation” a “chosen race”.

1. Chosen, comes from the Greek word, *eklectos*, which means to pick or choose out of a whole
2. We understand then that the church the *ecclesia* is an “*eklectos*” – an elect assembly of people chosen out of a fallen race
3. Thus Peter here calls the church *a chosen race, a chosen people, a chosen generation*, because God, passing by others, adopted them as it were in a special manner.
 - a. We were a people born alienated from God
 - b. But we have been adopted or born of God
 - c. Now we are a nation whose citizenship is in heaven

Phil 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- d. That is, the people of God, the church, is not a nation within a land with borders
- e. We are a nation without borders

4. A people chosen by God not because of anything in them or about them, but simply because He loved them

Deut 7:7-8 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

1 Cor 1:26-30 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

- a. Because God loved us He sent His only begotten Son into the world to save us
- b. Because the Son of God loved us He humbled Himself and offered Himself as a sweet smelling sacrifice unto the Lord. (cf. Eph 5:2)

5. Because of this we are a chosen generation with an ultimate and eternal significance

*1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus **we shall always be with the Lord.** Therefore **comfort one another with these words.***

B. Next we see the church is *a royal priesthood*

1. What had been lost by the rebellion of Abraham’s natural seeds has now, once again, been recovered through Christ

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

- a. Observe the condition of this covenant, “If you will indeed obey my voice and keep My Covenant then you shall be . . . a kingdom of priest
- b. What the law could not do God has accomplished by sending His Son into the world

Rom 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

2. The earthly things promised by covenant in the Old Testament is now fulfilled in Christ
 - c. The Old Testament saints only had an earthly taste of the heavenly things to come
 - d. What was promised has now been fully and really given in Christ
3. The great dignity and honor from which the church had fallen has now been restored in Christ, we are now a royal priesthood offering up the sacrifice of thanksgiving

Heb 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

4. We are a royal priesthood for we have been made kings and priest unto our God

Rev 1:5,6 To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

C. Next the church is called a "holy nation"

1. We have been sanctified in Christ, His perfect righteousness has been imputed to us

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.

2. Our sins are fully covered by the atoning blood of our Pascal Lamb

Heb 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Eph 5:25-28 ". . . as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, **that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**

3. In Christ we are a holy nation, a holy people unto our God

Calvin on this verse writes, "The meaning then is, as though he had said, "Moses called formerly your fathers a holy nation, a priestly kingdom, and God's peculiar people: all these high titles do now far more justly belong to you; therefore you ought to beware lest your unbelief should rob you of them." (Exodus 19:6)

D. Finally, God's own special people

1. The church is a special treasure to the Lord
 - a. The price paid for us make us a most precious people
 - b. We are a special treasure above all people upon the earth
2. Note carefully it is a conditional standing

Ex 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people

3. We have this standing in Christ alone for our hope is this:
 - a. This condition has been met by our Lord
 - b. Again I would remind you He alone has perfectly obeyed God's voice and He alone has kept His commandments and, herein is the hope and comfort of the Church, He has imputed that righteous to us
4. We have this standing in Christ alone for our hope is this:

Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:13-14

CONCLUSION: We are indeed *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people* because our Lord Jesus Christ left the glories of heaven above, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Rejoice saints of God for as the church of Jesus Christ this is our standing before God in Christ.